

Fordham Law School

FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History

Biographical Material

Alumni

1-1-1980

Malcolm Wilson - Law School at Rose Hill

Malcom Wilson

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/alumni_biographical

Recommended Citation

Wilson, Malcom, "Malcolm Wilson - Law School at Rose Hill" (1980). *Biographical Material*. Book 2.
http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/alumni_biographical/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni at FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. It has been accepted for inclusion in Biographical Material by an authorized administrator of FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. For more information, please contact tmelnick@law.fordham.edu.

LAW SCHOOL AT ROSE HILL

MALCOLM WILSON*

FEW remember, besides possibly those of us who were there, that in the early 1930's, the Law School had an evening session at Fordham's Rose Hill Campus in the Bronx. In those days there were morning, afternoon, and evening sessions of the Law School at its downtown location—the Woolworth Building. Doubtlessly it was the Great Depression, with its consequential economic dislocations, that required more and more putative Law School students to seek full-time employment, and caused a decrease in enrollment in the morning and afternoon sessions as well as an increase in enrollment in the evening session in the middle 1930's. Limited classroom space at the Woolworth Building proved inadequate for the accommodation of those who sought admission to the evening session. To relieve the pressure, the Law School instituted an additional evening session at Rose Hill.

All students had twelve hours of class each week, taking the same courses. There were no electives. Those who attended the evening sessions had class each Monday and Wednesday from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. each Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

I was one of sixty men who entered the first year class in the evening session on the Rose Hill Campus in September 1933. The very few women in the Law School's student body in those days were enrolled in one of the sessions at the Woolworth Building. About half of the sixty had graduated from college the previous June, while the rest were men who had been out of college for one or more years and whose entrance into Law School had probably been delayed for economic reasons. There was no such thing as a Law School Aptitude Test in those days. All one needed to be accepted for enrollment was an undergraduate degree from a recognized college or university, and, of course, the tuition. With the exception of a retired Army officer who died during the first semester, all my classmates had full-time employment. They were firemen, policemen, subway guards, teachers, bank tellers, and clerical employees in Federal, State, or City offices. In rare cases, students such as myself were clerks in law offices. The average salary for law clerks then was the princely sum of twenty-five dollars per week!

Our classes were held in the Biology Building, which was entered from Fordham Road directly opposite Theodore Roosevelt High School. The library of the Law School, modest in size and staff, was maintained at the Woolworth Building. The sole amenities available to us were restrooms and a single coin-box telephone. The adminis-

* Chairman of the Board, Manhattan Savings Bank; Governor of the State of New York, 1974; Class of '36, Fordham Law School.

tration of the Law School was represented exclusively by Frank Delaney, a full-time teacher at Fordham Preparatory School, who served as Registrar, Bursar, and attendance-keeper. All examinations, mid-year and year-end, were conducted at the Woolworth Building and it was generally on those occasions—and at our graduation in June 1936—that we saw our downtown classmates. The one other setting in which some of us saw some of them was at Communion Breakfasts held two or three times a year at Rose Hill under the sponsorship of the (long gone!) St. Thomas Aquinas Sodality.

The full-time faculty members of the Law School who wended their way to the Bronx to teach us were Professors John F.X. Finn (New York Practice), George Bacon (Criminal Law and Wills), Eugene Keefe (Personal Property and Agency), and Thomas L.J. Corcoran (Sales). Professor Wormser came up one evening to lecture on the *Dartmouth College* case. All our other teachers, who were equally capable, were part-time faculty members. Some of them also taught some of the day-time courses at the Woolworth Building. They included, among others, E. Borgia Butler (Trusts), his brother-in-law and law partner, Raymond O'Connell (Domestic Relations), Thomas Kerwin (Suretyship), and Thomas Hennessy (Equity). The latter reduced our number by 25% at the end of our second year through the failing grades he awarded at the completion of his full-year course!

Two very significant events occurred during our time in the Law School. One was the initial publication of the *Fordham Law Review*. The other was responsible for the demise of the evening session at Rose Hill. The Law School had attained a "Class A" rating from the accrediting committee of the American Bar Association, meeting all of the standards for such accreditation except one. The students in Fordham's evening classes carried the same schedule as those enrolled in the day-time sessions and finished their courses in the same three year period. The A.B.A., however, required that a "Class A" law school conduct evening session classes nine hours a week over a four year period rather than twelve hours a week over a three year period. Dean Wilkinson decided that conformance with this requirement and Fordham Law School's receipt of a "Class A" rating would best serve the interests of the Law School, its student body, and its future graduates. In my opinion, his decision was a wise one.

Since at least three other New York City Law Schools continued to offer a three year evening course, the enrollment of first year classes in the evening sessions at Fordham Law School plummeted following that decision in 1935. Because there was no longer a need for evening sessions on the Rose Hill Campus after those who had entered there in September 1934 completed their course of study, it was discontinued in June 1937.

Probably because we were an autonomous group, relatively small in number and geographically separated from the bulk of our classmates, our 1936 graduates of the Rose Hill evening session have

maintained a loose Class organization, which had its inception at a dinner on our Tenth Anniversary. We have had a Reunion Dinner almost each year since then, but our number has dwindled to sixteen at last count.

Although we seemed to be an appendage to the Law School, we had and have the same loyalty to the Law School as our contemporaries. In addition, we share with them and all the students and graduates of Fordham Law School the same sense of pride in the recognition that our Law School has earned as one of the very finest in the Nation.